

numbers were printed, and a golden throne. These two strange Things were talking to each other in low voices.

"That paper is a lost Fortune," said Happiness, turning to look. "Some rich human Up There has lost all their money. Fortune is talking to a lost Kingdom. A long time ago, a monarch in the Land of the Living lost their throne."

Jack's eyes were getting used to the extreme brightness of Happiness, and he found that if he peeped at her sideways, he could just make out the form of a smiling woman in the middle of the dazzling light.

"How were you lost?" he asked shyly.

"Through carelessness," sighed Happiness. "My owner is an actress. She's charming and talented, but she wasn't as kind as she should have been to the people she cared about, nor as hardworking as she might have been, even though she loved her job. Her gifts once brought her friends and success, but through laziness and selfishness, they slipped away and now, sadly, she has lost me, too."

"How will she get you back again?" asked the Christmas Pig.

"It will be difficult," said Happiness, "because she's looking for me in all the wrong places, and as she isn't used to admitting fault, I'm afraid I may be in the City of the Missed for a long time . . . perhaps forever. Are you going to tell me what *you're* doing here?" Happiness went on. "Or is it a secret?"

"A secret," said the Christmas Pig, before Jack could answer.

"I thought so. In that case," said Happiness, dropping her voice, "you might want to get out here. We seem to be slowing down, but I'll glow extra bright, so they can't see you."

Jack and the Christmas Pig looked around. Happiness was quite right: the gondolas were definitely slowing down.

"Come on," Jack whispered to the Christmas Pig, bracing himself at the thought of entering the icy water, "we'll go over the side."

"Good luck!" said Happiness.

Jack and the Christmas Pig climbed carefully over the side of the gondola, slipped into the freezing water, and let go of the boat, which drifted away, and Happiness blazing brighter than ever, so that nobody saw them go.

Gasping in the icy cold water, Jack managed to swim over to some steps that led up to the canal bank. However, when he looked back, all he could see of the Christmas Pig was his snout, which was bobbing on the surface. The Christmas Pig was drowning.



## FOLLOWED

Jack swam back just in time to stop the pig from sinking forever. By using only one of his arms and kicking his legs hard, Jack succeeded in dragging the waterlogged pig through the water and up the stone steps.

"Thank you, Jack," panted the Christmas Pig, whose toweling body was now greenish from the water. "You're a very good swimmer! I didn't like that at all," he admitted, squeezing himself out so that he stood in a small puddle.

"Why didn't you tell me you couldn't swim?" asked Jack, who was shivering violently now that he was out of the water and standing in the falling snow.



"I didn't know I couldn't swim until I was already sinking," said the Christmas Pig, "and then the water was in my mouth, so I couldn't tell you." After wringing out his ears, which left them somewhat lopsided, the Christmas Pig said, "Come on. Let's find DP."

One good thing about going in the canal was that the Christmas Pig's tummy beans weren't making as much noise as usual, because they were stuck together. He and Jack set off through the narrow streets of the City of the Missed.

Cobbled and lined with gorgeous villas, the alleys were just as beautiful as the waterways. Sparkling Christmas wreaths hung on doors and candlelit Christmas trees glowed in the windows. Jack and the Christmas Pig passed a few Things as they crossed snow-covered squares in the gathering darkness, but none of them seemed very curious about Jack and the Christmas Pig. A magnificent diamond brooch in the shape of a unicorn bowed politely as he made his way into his villa, and a beautiful, gold-embossed book flicked her pages in a casual wave as she passed, but just as in *Bother-It's-Gone*, Jack was troubled by the lack of toys.

"D'you think they put cuddly animals in a different part of town?" he asked the Christmas Pig.

"Maybe," said the Christmas Pig. "This does seem a larger city than the others. I think we're getting nearer the place where they're singing carols, though ..."

"Yes," said Jack, who was still shivering from his icy dip in the canal. "D'you think it's a party?"

"Perhaps," said the Christmas Pig. He squinted over his shoulder, looked as though he was going to say something, but seemed to change his mind. "Come on, let's see if we can find out where the toys are."

They walked on, but the farther they went, the stronger Jack's feeling that they weren't alone became. Twice he glanced back and saw nothing, but on the third occasion he thought he caught a glimpse of something black whisking away around a corner out of sight.

"CP, did you see that?" Jack whispered.

"Yes," said the Christmas Pig, who'd looked back at the same moment as Jack. "I *thought* something was following us. I think we might be safer mingling in a crowd . . . let's head for the singers. Come on, quick."



## THE PERFORMERS

**T**hey hurried on toward the place where the carols were being sung, and after a few minutes, they found themselves standing in an archway that looked out onto a large and beautiful square, strung with gleaming silver Christmas lights just like the canals. A choir of instruments was singing in one corner of the square. All of them—from the French horns and the violins, to the flutes and the tubas—had human voices now, and Jack had never heard carols sung so beautifully. For just a few seconds, he forgot how cold he was in his sodden pajamas, and simply marveled at the wonderful sights and sounds.



The square lay in front of a huge white palace, which had a golden roof and arched windows. On either side of the palace doors stood two Loss Adjusters, a pencil sharpener and a mallet, who, like the Loss Adjusters guarding the city gates, wore black hats with long black plumes.

A balcony stretched the length of the palace and Jack could see people-shaped Things standing there, listening to the choir of instruments. Like Happiness, each of these Things was giving off light. One was scarlet, another green, and several were bright blue. Jack was too far away to be able to see what the figures in the middle of the colored lights looked like, but he knew they must be extremely important, to live in the golden-roofed palace.

Meanwhile, right ahead of where Jack and the Christmas Pig stood, was a crowd of other Things packed together in the falling snow, their shadows long in the light of the dying day. They seemed to be watching some kind of performance that was taking place in their middle.

"Let's hide in that crowd," whispered the Christmas Pig, glancing over his shoulder again. "Keep your eyes peeled for DP!"

So they set off into the square, Jack's bare, frozen feet leaving footprints and the Christmas Pig's trotters leaving round, damp spots in the snow, and neither of them noticed the figure cloaked in black that slid out from behind a marble column to follow them.

None of the Things in the crowd took much notice of Jack and the Christmas Pig as they sidled in among them. When at last they were able to see what the crowd was watching, Jack and the Christmas Pig also stopped and stared.

All the performers were transparent and human-shaped, just like Pretense. A jester was juggling and doing backflips, while a little man with a long mustache was spinning plates on long poles. A chef was flipping pancakes, catching them every time, while a ballerina twirled in endless

pirouettes. One old man was tying a long length of rope into complicated knots, and another was performing card tricks.

"What are they?" Jack wondered aloud to a brand-new smartphone standing beside him.

"Lost Knacks," said the phone. "Clever little tricks that humans can do but which, through age or injury, poor memory or lack of practice, they lose."

"Can't they get them back?" asked Jack.

"Sometimes," said the phone. "Yesterday, a very clever magic trick was whooshed back up to the Land of the Living while we were watching. Very disappointing, because he hadn't finished. We're always sorry to lose Knacks, because they put on a show for us this time every evening—but the Knacks are just the warm-up act. Wait until you see today's Talent!"

Sure enough, the Lost Knacks finally bowed to much cheering, and they ran, tumbled, bounced, and pirouetted out of the square and out of sight.

Now a very large transparent lady, who was wearing a jeweled dress, strode into the middle of the square. Some of the onlookers cheered, but the phone groaned.

"You're out of luck. I was hoping for one of our Stories—they're always very entertaining—but it's a Voice."

Voice took a deep breath and began to sing in a language Jack didn't understand. Her song echoed off the stone arches and palace wall, making Jack's ears ring. He supposed Voice must be very talented, judging by the way all the jewelry and fine books were sighing in admiration, but the phone leaned over to Jack and said, "She was lost by an opera singer, Up There. I'm not much of a one for opera. Think I'll be getting home."



Phone hopped away. Jack would have liked to follow, because Voice's song was making his ears ring, but at that moment a Thing whispered in his ear. "Excuse me. Are you the ones who're looking for a toy pig?"



## THE KING'S INVITATION

Jack spun around to face a figure that appeared to be that of a woman. A black cloak hid her from head to toe, though violet light escaped from the hood and beneath the hem. Noticing that Jack had turned round, the Christmas Pig did so, too, and when he saw the cloaked figure, he took his trotters away from his ears and grasped Jack's arm, ready to run.

"Don't be alarmed," said the female voice from beneath the cloak. "I was sent to fetch you by one who means you well."

"Was it Happiness?" asked Jack.



"Yes, Happiness," said the woman, "but unless you want to get her into trouble, keep that quiet. A Thing could get eaten for helping you two. You've caused a lot of trouble. Follow me, and I'll explain."

The Christmas Pig still looked suspicious, but they followed the figure away from Voice and the crowd, into the shadows beneath an archway. Here the mysterious figure threw back her hood. She glowed with violet light as Happiness had shone with gold, but gave off no heat. Her face looked older than that of Happiness, and rather less kind.

"D'you know where DP is?" asked Jack.

"I'm afraid not," said the woman, "but the king does. His Majesty invites you both to dinner at the palace, where all will be explained."

"What king is this?" asked the Christmas Pig suspiciously. "The Loser's in charge down here. Everyone knows that."

"The Loser is in overall command," said the violet lady, "but we have a royal family here in the City of the Missed. I am His Majesty's ambassador. If you really want to find your pig, the king is the only one who can help . . . I'd have thought you'd be glad of some shelter, at least," she added, because Jack's teeth were chattering and green water was still oozing out of the Christmas Pig.

"It would be nice to get warm," Jack admitted, but the Christmas Pig still looked suspicious.

"Would you excuse us for a moment?" he said to the violet lady.

"Certainly," she replied, though she didn't seem pleased.

"I know she doesn't seem very friendly, but she must be good, if Happiness sent her," Jack muttered into the Christmas Pig's ear, once they'd moved a short distance away. He had trouble making himself heard, because Voice was still echoing around the square, but at least that meant the violet lady couldn't eavesdrop. "DP might be inside the palace! I love

him so much, they might have let him live there! Perhaps he's become royal!"

"I don't believe it," said the Christmas Pig, whose damp snout was slowly freezing in the evening air. "I never heard there was any king down here except the Loser. And how does that lady know who we're looking for? We never told Happiness we were after DP!"

"I expect word's got round," said Jack. "I asked Sheriff Specs and the chess piece about him."

"I still don't like it," said the pig. "It smells like a trap to me."

"This is the first time anybody's told us they know where DP is!" said Jack, now starting to get angry. "You heard what Poem said! We've got to succeed before Christmas Day, or I'll be trapped and I'll never be able to take DP home! There can't be much time left!"

When the Christmas Pig didn't answer, Jack said, "Fine, don't come—but I'm going!"

And with that, Jack turned and strode back toward the violet lady, who stood burning in the shadowy archway like a purple flame. Jack heard the Christmas Pig's belly beans behind him, and knew he was following.





## THE PALACE

**T**he violet lady accepted the news that they were ready to follow her with a brief smile, which showed her rather pointed teeth, then led them toward the palace, her black cloak flying behind her in the breeze.

“How are we going to get past the Loss Adjusters?” asked Jack as they approached the golden palace doors.

“Oh, you needn’t worry about them,” said the violet lady, with a haughty smile. “The king’s in charge of the Loss Adjusters here in the City of the Missed, and I’m His Majesty’s representative. Good evening to you!” she said grandly to the pencil sharpener and the mallet, who

both bowed as each opened a door. The mallet's head was so heavy he nearly toppled over, but saved himself by clutching the door handle.

"Good evening, Your Excellency," they said together.

A wonderful warmth enveloped Jack and the Christmas Pig as they stepped over the threshold of the palace. They now stood on a thick crimson carpet which was soft under Jack's bruised, frozen feet. Twin fires burned beneath two marble fireplaces on either side of a magnificent staircase with golden bannisters. At the foot of the stairs stood the very same diamond earrings Jack had seen back in Misland. They seemed to be employed now as maids, because they took the violet lady's black cloak, bowed, then wriggled away, disappearing through a side door.

"This way," said the violet lady to Jack and the Christmas Pig as she started to climb the stairs.

"May we ask your name, Your Excellency?" said the Christmas Pig as they followed, repeating the title he'd heard the Loss Adjusters use. Now that she was unrobed, their companion filled the hall with her violet light. A tall, thin woman, she looked down at them as she said, "My name is Ambition."

"How does someone lose their ambition?" wondered Jack out loud.

"By being a fool," said Ambition coldly. "My mistress and I achieved great things together. She's a politician—or rather, she was. She suffered a small setback—lost a trifling vote—but that oughtn't to have mattered!" cried Ambition, coming to a sudden halt, so that Jack nearly walked into her. Her eyes emitted sparks, and for a moment, Jack found her rather frightening.

"We could have recovered from that setback and climbed together to even greater heights! But no . . . she lost me, the weak-willed fool!" shouted Ambition, shaking her fist at the finding hole in the ceiling.



The sound of her words echoing off the marble walls seemed to bring Ambition back to herself. She took several deep breaths. "My apologies," she said stiffly. "I've lived here in the palace for several years now, waiting for her to find me again. Sometimes I fear it will never happen . . . but none of this will help you find your pig."

She began to climb the stairs again. Jack and the Christmas Pig glanced at each other, then followed. Jack could tell the Christmas Pig was having even more doubts about Ambition now, and in truth, she'd made Jack quite nervous, too. However, he didn't want to turn back, so he tried to look cheerful and unconcerned.

At the top of the stairs, they found more double doors, which were opened by a pair of solid gold fish knives.

"Your Excellency," they muttered respectfully as Ambition passed through into the room beyond. Jack and the Christmas Pig followed, watched curiously by the glinting knives.



## THE ROYAL FAMILY

**T**he room they now entered was even grander than the hall, with gilded columns and mirrors. The vaulted ceiling was painted with pictures of the three cities of the Land of the Lost: the low wooden houses of Disposable, the neat snow-topped chalets of Bother-It's-Gone, and the villas and canals of the City of the Missed. Beneath the painted ceiling stood a long candlelit table, which was laid with enough golden plates and crystal glasses for fifteen Things. At the head of the table stood a large golden throne, which was currently empty.

In front of another fire, in a ball of emerald light, stood a very handsome young man who was examining himself in the mirror over the mantelpiece. He looked delighted with what he saw there.



"Good evening," he said, without taking his eyes off his own reflection, but turning his head this way and that, to get a better view of his profile.

"That's Beauty," said Ambition, indicating the green man, "and that," she said, pointing to a ball of orange light, inside which stood a young man with a plump, smiley face, "is Optimism. They'll entertain you while I tell His Majesty his guests have arrived."

Ambition swept out of the room, leaving Jack and the Christmas Pig feeling nervous and extremely shabby in all this splendor. However, the moment the golden fish knives had closed the door behind Ambition, Optimism came bounding over to Jack and the Christmas Pig, beaming from ear to ear. He had round, innocent eyes and, like Happiness, gave off a pleasant warmth. After seizing Jack's hand and shaking it, and doing the same with the Christmas Pig's trotter, he cried, "Marvelous to meet you! What jolly good Things you are! I feel as though I've known you forever! Let's be best friends!"

"Hello," said Jack timidly.

"I hear you're looking for an old toy pig?" said Optimism, bouncing excitedly on the balls of his feet.

"Yes," said Jack.

"Well, I'm *sure* you'll find him! Everything will work out splendidly! And you'll love our king! He's a very good Thing"—for just a second, Optimism's smile faltered, but then he beamed as widely as ever—"deep down, you know!"

"Isn't *anybody* going to admire me?" asked Beauty indignantly, turning from the mirror to look at Jack and the Christmas Pig.

"Oh—er—yes," said the Christmas Pig. "You're very handsome."

"Which is more than can be said for you two," said Beauty with a smirk, looking from the now-bedraggled Christmas Pig, with his lop-

sided ears, to Jack's filthy bare feet and muddy pajamas. "Your beauty must be here somewhere, too! Or perhaps you never had any to lose?"

With this rude remark, he turned back to the mirror. Then a door opened at the far end of the room. A ball of indigo light entered. For a moment, Jack thought it might be the king, but as the light came nearer, he saw a very old lady shuffling along in its center.

"Good evening," she said in a high, cracked voice.

"Good evening," said the Christmas Pig.

"This is Memory," said Optimism.

Memory peered at the Christmas Pig for a moment or two, then said, "Eighty-five years ago, my mistress owned a pig, but hers was of china; what we call a piggy bank. Its sides were painted with little blue flowers and she used to keep her pocket money inside it. One Sunday afternoon, eighty-four years ago, my mistress's younger sister, Amelia Louise —"

"Memory," said Beauty with a yawn, "nobody's interested. Nobody cares."

"Oh, I'm sure it will be a smashing story!" said Optimism, still beaming. Jack wondered how he could smile so much without his face hurting.

"—broke that piggy bank with the little blue flowers—"

"We've heard this at least a thousand times already," groaned Beauty, while Memory continued to mumble.

The door at the far end of the room opened again. Six balls of glowing blue light entered the room, each of which had an identical man inside it, all of them small and neat and serious looking. They couldn't *all* be the king, Jack thought, getting more confused by the second.

"Good evening," said the six blue men, speaking with one voice, and drowning out Memory, who continued to mumble her story about the



piggy bank. "We are the Principles."

They bowed in unison and Jack, who didn't know what else to do, bowed back, as did the Christmas Pig, whose tummy beans, now drying out in the heat from the fire, made a crunching noise.

"I thought the king told you to stay in your rooms?" asked Beauty, frowning at the Principles' reflections in the mirror.

"After carefully considering His Majesty's order," said the Principles, speaking together as before, "we decided it would be against ourselves to stay in our rooms."

Jack whispered to the Christmas Pig, "What are Principles?"

The Principles seemed to have heard him, because they answered together, "We are the Things who make humans behave with honesty and decency. Alas, our owner—a businessman—lost us one by one in pursuit of riches. He is now a wealthy crook. He likes the money, yet he is unhappy, because he knows he was better loved and respected while he still had us. Unfortunately, lost Principles are among the hardest Things to find, so we expect to live here forever. We have therefore taken on a new job. We attempt to keep the king on the path of righteousness."

"And does the king often need your help?" asked the Christmas Pig.

But before the Principles could answer, there was a loud fanfare and the doors behind them opened.





## THE KING

**T**he whole dining room now filled with scarlet light, which glinted off the crystal goblets and turned the plates bloodred. The crimson figure standing in the doorway made even Ambition, who'd entered the room behind him, seem dim by comparison.

Beauty, Optimism, and the Principles bowed, and Jack and the Christmas Pig copied them, while Memory dropped into a deep curtsy and fell silent at last.

"This," said Ambition proudly to Jack and the Christmas Pig, "is Power, our king. Your Majesty, these are the two you've been waiting for: the ones who're looking for the lost pig."

By screwing up his eyes, Jack was able to make out the figure casting the scarlet light. He was a big, fierce-looking man with a sour expression and a jutting jaw.

"Welcome," he said, in a booming voice. "What d'you think of my city? Do you like it?"

"It's very beautiful, Your Majesty," said the Christmas Pig. Jack was too frightened to speak.

"Beautiful?" said Power, who seemed displeased. "Many places are beautiful. I consider my city to be magnificent. Stupendous. *SUBLIME!*"

He thundered the last word and everyone jumped.

"It's those things, too!" squeaked the Christmas Pig.

Power turned to the Principles.

"I *THOUGHT*," he shouted, "I told you to stay in your *ROOMS*?"

"It was against ourselves to stay in our rooms," repeated the Principles, speaking in one voice as before.

Power's huge hands balled themselves into fists and he ground his teeth. Jack and the Christmas Pig both took a step backward.

"Your Majesty," murmured Ambition, laying a hand on Power's thick arm. "I beg you to remember our objective."

Her touch seemed to make Power think better of shouting at the Principles.

"You're quite right, Ambition. Everyone, sit *DOWN!*" boomed the king, and he strolled to the head of the table and took his place on the throne.

Jack sat down between the Christmas Pig and Beauty, who was now admiring himself in the back of a shining spoon. Optimism settled into the seat opposite Jack, smiling as widely as ever.



"There's no need to be nervous!" he called across the table. "I just know everything will turn out wonderfully!"

"Excellent," growled Power, in response to something Ambition had just whispered in his ear. Even his ordinary speaking voice was so loud that it made the cutlery rattle. "And the door's locked?"

"It will be, after the servants confirm she's gone to bed," said Ambition. "As for the other . . . well, I'm afraid I haven't been able to find her. Your Majesty knows how she's always flitting off into dirty corners where no decent Thing would go. I had the Loss Adjusters try and hunt her d—I mean, find her," she corrected herself, with half a glance at Jack, "but alas, they were unsuccessful."

Jack gathered that Power and Ambition were talking about the Things who ought to have been sitting in the two empty spaces left at the table, but he felt too scared to ask questions.

Power now clapped his enormous hands together twice. At once, a procession of Things came hurrying through the servants' door, all carrying food, and a very odd assortment it was, too.

There was a single peppermint as large as Jack's head, a few giant crisps, a pillow-like slice of birthday cake, pieces of popcorn the size of cauliflowers, and largest of all, a chocolate tree decoration wrapped in colored foil and shaped like a fat Santa Claus. The sugar tongs carrying it groaned as she heaved it onto the table.

"The only food here is lost food, of course," boomed the king down the table at Jack, as the Things that had delivered the food ran out of the room again. "We Things have no need of food—but *YOU* will want to eat," he said, glaring at Jack, "because *YOU*, of course, are a *LIVING BOY!*"





## POWER'S PLAN

**A**s soon as Power shouted the words “living boy,” loud metallic clicks sounded from either end of the room and Jack realized that the servants outside had just locked the doors.

“We were afraid of something like this,” muttered the Principles all together.

“He isn’t a living boy,” said the Christmas Pig in a squeaky voice. “He’s an action figure!”

“That’s right,” said Jack, whose mouth had gone dry. “Pajama Boy, with the power of sleep and dreams.”

“He’s got his own cartoon!” said the Christmas Pig.

“We disapprove of lying,” said the Principles in one voice.

"Eighty years ago," piped up Memory, "my mistress's sister, Amelia Louise, was caught lying when—"

"*QUIET!*" yelled Power, banging his huge fist on the table. One of the crystal goblets toppled over and cracked. Memory fell silent again. Power got to his feet, burning a deeper, darker red than ever, and all the Things around the table looked nervous except for Ambition, from whose eyes sparks were flying again, and whose pointed teeth were revealed in a wide grin.

"Do you *KNOW*," thundered Power, staring at Jack, "why I'm *HERE*, in the Land of the Lost?"

"No," whispered Jack.

Beneath the table, the Christmas Pig stretched out a trotter to hold Jack's hand.

"My owner," said Power, beginning to pace up and down, "lost me by failing to stamp down hard enough"—he smacked one huge fist into the other hand—"on his *ENEMIES!*"

"Together, we ruled an entire *COUNTRY!* To keep me, my master kept the *PEOPLE*"—as Power bawled this word, he screwed up his face in disgust and hatred—"in their proper places, which is to say, *ON THEIR KNEES!*" he thundered, a mad look in his bright red eyes. "But *THEN*," he bellowed, "a boy like *YOU* dared *CHALLENGE* my master in *PUBLIC!* And *THAT CHILD*," shouted Power, "gave the *PEOPLE* courage to *RE-VOLT!*"

Power's voice rose to a scream.

"AND I WAS SUCKED DOWN HERE, TO THE LAND OF THE LOST!"

"Power, dear," said Beauty, "*do* stop shouting. Quite apart from the racket, it makes you look awfully ugly."